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ABSTRACT

Indiana University at Kokomo's program of Off-Campus Career Assessment was initiated in 1986 to assist in the recruitment of nontraditional students and serve as a vehicle for strengthening campus image. It delivers career interest testing and counseling to adults working in targeted local industries, with industry cooperation. While concerted recruitment does not occur at the interest testing sessions, an admission staff representative is available to observe the level of interest of participants for followup and to make personal contact. Career exploration and occupational goal-setting are made available after the interest assessment. The program is offered as a service to the community but has brought additional benefits to the university, including the attention of area employers, contacts with employers who may later be of assistance in placing graduates, increased nontraditional student applicants, and media exposure. During the program's first two years, 17% of the individuals who completed the interest assessment matriculated at the university. (MSE)

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OFF-CAMPUS CAREER ASSESSMENT IN RECRUITING THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

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OFF CAMPUS CAREER ASSESSMENT IN RECRUITING THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT

ABSTRACT

Indiana University at Kokomo's program of Off-Campus Career Assessment was initiated in 1986 to assist in the recruitment of non-traditional students and to serve as a vehicle for strengthening campus image. A year after its inception, the unique program was selected by AASCU as a finalist in the annual Mitau competition for innovative programming.

The off-campus career assessment is essentially the delivery of an on-campus service, i.e., career interest testing and counseling, to an external audience. The distinctiveness of the program rests in the fact that a valuable service (vocational counseling) is provided to adults at no cost. Additional program features include the targeted market of industry as a conduit to prospective students and implementation of the program without major expense.

The educational and career needs of adult students are increasingly receiving attention as student populations shift to a non-traditional profile. The program notes the importance of career choice for adults as a motivating factor for consideration of higher education. The description of the program herein describes how the concept was developed, structured, marketed and operationalized. Evaluation of impact was measured by participant responses and marked media exposure. The outline that follows provides details on how institutions can implement a similar program. After a primary thrust in 1986-87 and 1987-88, the program has been scaled back, because initial objectives have been achieved.

OFF CAMPUS CAREER ASSESSMENT IN RECRUITING THE NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION:

Indiana University at Kokomo developed a new service from the office of Career Development and Placement that was recognized as innovative by AASCU in their 1987 Mitau Award competition. The program was instituted with a three-fold purpose:

1. To provide a meaningful service to area employers that are a vital constituency to the University,
2. To aid older adult students in goal clarification permitting them to seriously consider the advantages of additional education,
3. To assist the Office of Admissions in developing non-traditional student prospects.

Beginning three years ago in the fall of 1986, the Director of Career Development started conducting off-campus, career assessments, for adults at selected industrial settings. Contacts are made with Personnel Directors who respond desiring more information about the service, which is packaged as career testing, assessment, and advising for interested employees. Personnel Directors agree to serve as liaisons and assist in structuring the on-site University linkage with employees.

At the first meeting, employees are guided on how the program works and what expectations should be. Participants are instructed on how to complete the specially designed career assessment instrument, which is a hard copy of American College Testing's DISCOVER Program. Completed interest tests are returned to the Personnel Office and forwarded to the University for scoring.

Follow-up consultations are arranged through the industry's personnel

office. When employees come to the second-step counseling session, they are afforded an opportunity to learn about degree options.

An admissions staff representative accompanies the Director of Career Development to the assessment session. Concerted student recruitment is not promoted. The University desires to develop student prospects, but not without losing sight of the program commitment, which is career exploration for individuals, not would-be students. The on-site exit session affords staff the opportunity to review the level of interest from employees. This person-to-person contact permits judgments about whom to invite to campus or to contact by mail or telephone.

WHY WAS THE PROGRAM DEVELOPED?:

This program was conceptualized as an opportunity to gain greater visibility for the Office of Career Development and Placement. The Dean of Student Services had attended the 1986 Conference on the Freshman Year Experience, participating in several sessions where members of career placement offices were represented. At that time these professionals expressed a desire to assist more in the goal of campus-wide student retention. Two months after the conference, IUK's Director of Career Development was assisting the Director of Admissions on a visit to a large industry. Upon return, the Career Development Director noted that the older adults who attended the information session had more questions about occupational goals rather than application procedures. It was at this juncture that the Dean of Student Services and Director of Career Development decided that the University could offer a valuable service to working adults who had latent degree aspirations, but unclear career goals.

The program was designed and moved forward, acknowledging that the following benefits would accrue to the University:

1. The institution would go on record as providing a valuable service to area employers.
2. The Career Development Office would develop important contacts with Personnel Directors who at a later time could be most helpful when placing graduates.
3. Non-traditional student prospects for the University would be identified and moved along a continuum to the point where they would become more than just a prospect, but be prepared to make a decision to apply for admission to a specific degree program.
4. The program, delivered as a free public service, would be a means to achieve attention from the media, which would be of value to the University as a whole and Office of Career Development in particular.

HOW WAS THE PROGRAM MARKETED?:

In the planning stages a decision was made to target specific industries or companies where the University wanted visibility but also where there would be manageable access to participants. Companies with a size of 200-900 employees were selected because of their numerical potential for prospective students and also because the projected number of participants could be regulated by the University staff at the on-site visits. Larger corporations were considered, but not chosen because the estimated number of clients would be too large. A simple survey was conducted to determine which of the selected companies had an educational tuition reimbursement program for employees. Equipped with this list of employers, initial contacts were made with the Personnel Offices in these organizations.

Personnel Directors are presented with the program concept, a service packaged as career testing, assessment and counseling for interested

employees. It is made available for free. Most Personnel Directors are cognizant of the value of education in enhancing productivity in a work environment. With little persuasion these administrators are convinced that the University can provide a beneficial service that their company does not have time to deliver.

Non-traditional students are chosen as a target population because they demonstrate a greater concern and awareness about matching interests and skills with a specific degree objective. These older adults, already employed, will invest in more education generally if it is perceived that the learning will enhance occupational mobility. The Career Development Office is working to identify adults who have interest in higher education but need some career guidance to serve as a motivating factor to continue their quest for learning.

The assessment instrument is tailored with the adult in mind, listing questions about task behaviors for which a working adult can respond. The information provided at the follow-up visit includes a summary of the respondents' desired work characteristics, values clarification, potential vocations, future job trends, education required, and beginning salaries.

In sum it is not difficult to market a free service. Success though, is attributed to a course of action that is well defined. The program is delivered to those corporations that the University is interested in and the number of participants anticipated legitimizes this student recruitment vehicle.

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM ON THE ORGANIZATION:

Public universities in Indiana have been encouraged by policy makers to play an integral role in the state's economy. The IU Kokomo campus, with 3600 commuter students, does not have the research facilities and other resources

to directly assist business and industry. Graduates in programs such as Nursing, Business, and Education serve the region. Our campus wanted to go on record of doing more. A public service related to the economic sector was a logical approach.

Considerable attention from the local media about this unique service produced awareness on campus from faculty and students that previously was not experienced. Staff members coordinating the program have presented this model program at six (6) different national conferences. These professional development opportunities have been very important to the individuals involved and additional secondary publicity has resulted. Significant attention came in the fall of 1987 when the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) selected the Kokomo campus as one of ten institutions demonstrating innovative programming, in the annual Mitau Award Competition.

PROGRAM EVALUATION, ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES:

This multi-faceted program presents several objectives for evaluation. During the first two years of the program 221 off-campus client assessments were conducted. The enrollment rate (matriculation) during this period was 17 percent for the individuals who completed the assessment. The goal of generating adult prospects was realized although matriculant rate was not as high as projected. Relationships with specific area employers continues to very be positive, resulting in "call-backs". No attempt has been made to perform an extended analysis of the program. In this endeavor, quantifiable results do not overshadow the goal of assisting adults to overcome barriers to pursue additional education.

The primary success criterion is increased visibility for the Office of Career Development and Placement. Public awareness of the campus and student prospects are secondary. At the time of program start-up it was difficult to

measure numerically the impact of the publicity gained from this community-business service. The off-campus career assessment program was the single most media factor during 1987-88. The number of students on campus using the services of the Career Development Office has increased 15% over the last three years.

CONCLUSION:

The IU-Kokomo office of Career Development consists of two people, a director and secretary. The program described is not budgeted as a distinct line-item. Time and priorities are reallocated to accommodate the program.

We believe that this program exemplifies how a small operating unit can be aggressive and demonstrate institutional effectiveness by its ability to be creative and offer new programming using existing resources. Within the field of Career Development there are increasingly many opportunities to advance the University's mission in a changing environment. Harold Hodginkinson, in his futuristic projections, notes that we will see more occupational mismatches in the labor force. Many people without degrees will be asked by their employer to acquire more training or education. And conversely, the accelerating creation of service sector jobs may put educational institutions in the onerous position of producing narrowly trained college graduates who are over qualified for a changing market place.

The Office of Career Development at IU-Kokomo recognizes these challenges as opportunities to serve. In sum we are fulfilling a vital transitional role that Ernest Boyer called for in his book, College. We are closing the gap between high school education and the college experience, establishing a bridge so that access to higher education is less encumbered for some of the public seeking the "right" path to learning.